

CASE OF THE CONJURERS VERSUS DR. HYSLOP AND SPIRITUALISM

To the Editor of The New York Times:

DR. HYSLOP has given to the psychical world a most extraordinary demonstration of his inability to correctly grapple with the very problems in which he poses as an authority. Not only this, but he has also shown us that he cannot always control his temper.

A scientist, above all others, should be cool, calculating and deliberate and should never become flurried or befogged.

For thirty years a woman juggler of international fame, posing as a spirit medium, had performed certain feats in the presence of some of our most famous European scientists, including such men as Sir Oliver Lodge, Prof. Lombroso, and many others, who declared to the world that the performances of the woman could not be fully explained by any theory of imposture, but that some unknown force in nature would have to be acknowledged.

Almost every magazine and newspaper throughout the world published broadcast the conclusions of these illustrious men, and finally it became a very generally accepted fact that there were some real occult phenomena produced in the presence of Mme. Palladino.

The woman was brought to the United States in order that American scientists could be assured that their brethren on the other side of the water had not gone astray in their reckonings.

The American scientists were incredulous, they could not persuade themselves to believe that tables floated in the air without secret physical contact of some kind; they could not believe that the ghostly hands seen at the woman's séances were real, and they wanted proof that trickery was not the true explanation of the alleged miracles.

The problem was the genuineness of the phenomena, and always had been. In all the discussions by Lodge, Lombroso, Flammarion, Meyers, the late Prof. James and Dr. Hodgson, the question of trickery was invariably the fundamental one.

Therefore, when Prof. Dickinson S. Miller of Columbia University and Prof. Joseph Jastrow of the University of Wisconsin, took up the case, they invited John W. Sargent, W. S. Davis, Joseph Rinn, and myself to co-operate with them because of our having had considerable experience with the tricks of so-called spirit mediums.

Now, from the beginning of the investigations Dr. Hyslop had expected that conjurers would be called into the séances, and he thought in many ways to keep them out.

We have several letters from him addressed to one of our number in which he continually protested against our connection with the case, and before the first séance was given he said that prestidigitateurs were about as competent to

go into the matter as longshoremen would be.

But Prof. Miller, Prof. Jastrow, and others took a different view of the case and knew that the problem of trickery could best be fathomed by conjurers.

Our success proves that Profs. Miller and Jastrow knew what they were doing when they sought our co-operation. Moreover, the late Prof. William James and Miss Alice Johnson, Secretary of the English Society for Psychical Research, wanted us to go into the case. When the phenomena were finally shown to be mere tricks, Dr. Hyslop himself published a twenty-five-page exposure in his Journal by one of our party. He also commended our work in the warmest terms: "Their methods of investigating Eusapia's habits and actions must recommend themselves to every scientific man."

Since then, however, his old antipathy to conjurers has again taken possession of him and he is now calling them "plebs," "street gamins," "troglodytes," and "intellectual vagabonds," and believes that he has now found a wedge which will henceforth keep conjurers out of spiritistic investigations.

He tells us that only experts in abnormal psychology should be eligible as investigators. He declares that it is hysteria that should be investigated, and that we "troglodytes" are not competent to

investigate hysteria, and that the "intellectual vagabond" scientists do not know much more about the matter than the conjurers.

Dr. Hyslop might have said that sign painters are not competent to paint signs because they are not civil engineers.

Had Sir Oliver Lodge told the world that Eusapia Palladino, while in a state of hysteria, managed to push and lift tables without being conscious that she did so, then specialists in mental disorders could have been taken into the case and the conjurers would have looked on with pity; but nothing of the kind happened. Sir Oliver practically ignored the mental condition of Palladino and distinctly told us that some of the phenomena were genuine.

Dr. Hyslop has gone far out of his way to find an excuse for his outbreak of vituperation and his denunciation of the men who did, in a few sittings, what men of his own type had not succeeded in doing in thirty years. He has been actuated by petty spite and jealousy. As a Spiritualist he is propagating his belief and selling books. He hates opposition. He has never come out into the open and offered to demonstrate the things which he professes to have seen. His favorite subject at present he hides under an assumed name. The two physicians who witnessed her work, we are also told, are hidden by names he ad-

mits are not theirs, yet he is constantly seeking funds and asking the public to contribute, that he may be enabled to continue his investigations. In order to help him we will make him a present of \$2,000 if he can produce one iota of evidence that the theory he now holds is anything more than a delusion and a snare for others. A fair investigator would welcome conjurers, or any one else, who can help solve spiritistic mysteries.

We have just received a letter from Prof. Jastrow, the famous psychologist, who was with us in the Palladino exposures, and here is what he says:

"I feel sure that your position is right and that Hyslop is wrong. Conjurers and scientific psychologists are on the same basis—common sense. They refuse to investigate things at the valuation of another, and both know that it takes more skill to get at facts than to explain them. Both refuse to be humbugged, hence my faith in conjurers."

No man ever stood higher as an investigator in the estimation of Dr. Hyslop than our mutual friend, the late Dr. Hodgson, and this is what he said:

"As a matter of fact, I have found in my experience that learned scientific men are the most easily duped of any in the world."

Then why not call in the conjurer?

JAMES L. KELLOGG.